

## Useless Hearings

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The opening of the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings on left-wing aid to the Vietcong proved as disorderly and unproductive as the work of this committee usually is. There is little reason to suppose that any information developed in these hearings could form the basis of a constitutionally viable piece of legislation.

The free-speech guarantees of the First Amendment offer wide protection for radical, inflammatory and antiwar talk—and no one who understands the essence of a free society would have it otherwise. Insofar as demonstrations interfere with the movement of troops or war materials, they can be handled under existing law. No blanket new legislation is needed to deal with treason or sabotage.

Despite our belief that neither the hearings—nor the committee—serve any useful purpose, we are glad that the three-judge Court of Appeals vacated a lower court order enjoining the committee from conducting its inquiry. Federal Judge Howard Corcoran may well have been within his legal powers in issuing the original restraint. As Representative Claude Pepper of Florida reminded his incensed colleagues in the House yesterday, each branch of government is under the rule of law and the courts are the final interpreters of the law.

But the injunction would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to enforce; and it placed the court in an unnecessarily awkward position in its relationship to Congress. The solution to the excesses of the Un-American Activities Committee must come from Congress, where the problem has its origins. The members of the House can expect an interminable round of futile and embarrassing controversies so long as they permit this committee to roam about with an inherently vague and unworkable mandate.